AFRAMBEC FLAME

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JULY 4th./FREEDOM FOR WHOM

On July 4th. American-born Afrikans in Omaha will turn out in large numbers for the annual "Stone Soul Picnic." As usual there will be music and dancing, visual art displays, and other products of "soul" culture. Practically speaking, July 4th. is a good day for such festivities in that is a national holiday and most folks are off work.

But this is not a one-dimensional world. There is more before us than practicality. There is principle. There are reality and myth. While July 4th. does provide us with an opportunity to get together en masse and have a good time, it should also provide us with an opportunity to take a clear-eyed look at Independence Day as it relates to us.

Independence Day is held in celebration of this nation's gaining of independence from Great Britain. But did we gain from that independence? Were we not chattel slaves prior to independence? Did we not spill our blood for this country during the war of independence and then return to the plantations? Did we not help in the slaughter of so-called "Indians" and assist the white man in driving this country's only native people onto reservations? Did we not assist in the forceful theft of land from Mexicans?

Our history in this country has been the history of a people used to protect a system from which we have derived dubious benefit. Abraham Lincoln "freed" us so that we could help the North win the Civil War, and chattel slavery was replaced by Jim Crow laws. It was, in fact, our forced labor in the cotton and tobacco fields upon which this nation's wealth was built.

So when we speak of Independence Day, we necessarily speak of the super-exploitation of us as a people, of the spilling of our sweat and the sacrifice of our lives in exchange for broken or hollow promises. And this legacy is not one to be spoken of only in retrospect. A slave is not just one who is forced to labor. He or she is one who is forced to act in the interests of someone other than him or herself. Is that not our situation now, as it always has been in this country?

You recall grade school history class the Boston Tea Party and the battle cry which accompanied that incident--"No taxation without representation." To pay tribute(in the form of taxes) to an authority without say-so as to how the tribute is to be spent by that authority is to be a slave. We did not ask to be brought to this land nor did we ask to be segregated(geographically) from the "mainstream of society." But we are so segregated and our communities comprise a veritable nation within a nation. Like colonial subjects, we pay for programs which are supposed to serve us, while others determine the nature of those programs and how they are to be administered.

We do not control our schools, the police who run roughshod over our people, the major businesses by which those of our people who are employed make their living, the communications media, etc. Generally our communities control nothing in the way of goods, manufacture or distribution of goods, or services that come into our communities. As salt poured on this wound, much of what we pay for with our tax money serves to perpetuate our subject status.

On July 4th. American-born Afrikans will

be marching in parade behind a flapping Stars & Stripes, chewing on the garbage (once discarded from the kitchens of slave-masters) we call "soul food" at Carter Lake, and so forth. And while most of us will not be consciously participating in these goings on out of a patriotic frame of mind, by participating at all, we will be making clowns of ourselves and casting insult at those of us who have been killed by America because of their refusal to live the lie of American freedom: Nat Turner, Denmark Vessey, Medgar Evers, Fred Hampton, Mark Clark, George Jackson, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, et al.

We will be casting insult to those who struggled and are struggling forthrightly for our emancipation(in substance rather than in appearance): W.E.B. Dubois, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ron Dellums, Fannie Lou Hamer, Angela Davis, Ernie Chambers, and many others.

We will be casting insult to those of us who have been imprisoned for acting in the interest of the liberation of American-born Afrikan people, to those who have been imprisoned for trying to "make it" illegally because America would not let or made it very difficult for them to "make it" legally, to those of us imprisoned by addiction to drugs or alcohol because America gave them despair.

But this is only January. Why the big fuss over an Independence Day that is some five months away? For two reasons: one being that planning for this year's "Stone Soul" activities will begin shortly, if it hasn't already; the other reason is that the birthday of the late Malcolm X is not that far away--May 19th. It is hoped that this editorial will move some people to serious thought as to how they will address the question of July 4th. celebration. For if there is to be a "Stone Soul" commemoration, it should be either one of protest against our continued oppression or one of celebration of the fact that we have been able to survive, despite America.

And finally, if we can manage to find the energy to celebrate the 4th., we should certainly be able to find the energy to celebrate the birthdate of one of our greatest leaders/thinkers, Malcolm X, an American-born Afrikan whose place of birth was Omaha. In Malcolm we can surely take pride. And it is urged here that American-born Afrikans in Omaha and Lincoln celebrate Malcolm's birthday this year from the 16th. of May through the 22nd., culminating(in Omaha) with a major block of activities at Malcolm X Park(known by the white folks as "Kountze Park") on the 22nd.

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization is willing to meet with those of you who are interested in this proposal to discuss the development of an agenda for this week of celebration.

-the editor

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. The Harambee Afrikan Cultural .
. Organization takes this oppor- .
. tunity to simply mention the .
. names of some folks who are .
. getting down around here in .
. behalf of the interests of Ame- .
. rican-born Afrikan people. .
. .
. Ernie Chambers, Buddy Hogan, .
. Doreen Charles, Ben Gray, Karen .
. Marion, Florene Langford, .
. Julian LaFontant, Daniel Wiafe, .
. Jimmy Smith, Asuquo Umoren .
. .
. We will have more to say about .
. the above-mentioned folks as .
. time goes on and will recognize .
. others as well. To all of these .
. we say, "Keep on pushing." .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

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FROM OTHER SOURCES

Losing the Roof Over One's Head--"The proposal(by the Reagan administration to consider food stamps as income in calculating rent for poor people in public housing) would effectively increase rents 30% for most of the 8 million people living in federally subsidized low-income housing....Congress has already passed an increase amounting to 20% over five years for subsidized tenants. Rents will rise from 25% of the family's income to 30%. According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition(NLIHC), the nation's largest subsidized housing advocacy group, a family of three living in New York receiving $377 a month in welfare payments and $65 monthly in food stamps would have their rent increased from $143 to $186 a month. This would have the mother and her two children approximately $47 a week to pay for all other expenses including food, clothing, medical care, transportation and most of their utility bill....The average family on welfare in Mississippi would have $8 a month left after paying a 30% increase in their rent, according to the NLIHC. ..."

-THE GUARDIAN(1/20/82)

Some Figures On Zimbabwe--"During the first half of 1981 emigration rose to an average of 1,800 monthly, compared with 1,430 in 1980. The emigrants were virtually all whites--contrasted with a monthly average of 700 immigrants, mostly black....the number of white commercial farmers has declined by only 600, to about 5,000....Overall there are thought to be around 200,000 whites in Zimbabwe(compared with 270,000 prior to independence) out of a total population of 7.5 million....In the 1981-82 budget government expenditures have been increased by 37 percent. Most of the budget is allocated to the greatly increased number of children in schools--more than 1.8 million(compared with only 800,000 in the previous budget); free health care for most wage earners; an oversized army; and a national transportation system....Each year brings 100,000 new job-seekers to the labor market. An estimated 70 percent of the black working class in Salisbury live beneath the poverty line, and there are 50,000 names on the official waiting list for housing...."

-WORLD PRESS REVIEW(Feb. '82)

Statistics On Legalized Murder--"Of the 891 people on Death Row now, almost all were too poor to afford the kind of legal representation which could have gotten them an acquittal, lesser charges, or at the very least, a life rather than death sentence....Almost half are people of color: 41% are Black, 4½% are Hispanic, and 1% are others such as Native American and Asian American.... Perhaps more important than the race of the defendant is the race of the victim. While 54% of the murder victims in this country are Black, 85% of the people on Death Row are there convicted of the murder of a white person. 75% of the Black defendants are there for cases involving a white victim; only 4% of the white defendants are there for cases involving a Black victim. (Significantly, it is not Black people who advocate the death penalty; a 1978 survey showed that support for the death penalty came from only 24% of the Black community but from 70% of the white community.)....There are arbitrary factors as well as discriminatory ones: where the murder took place is a major one. 70% of all Death Row cases are in the South; even where in a state the murder occurred will affect whether or not a defendant is more or less likely to get a death sentence...."

-MISSOURI VALLEY SOCIALIST(Winter 1981-2)

MAN AND WOMAN

MAN USE WOMAN
USE WOMAN TO EXTREME
PLAY WOMAN EMOTIONS
BRING DOWN HER ESTEEM
MAKE WOMAN FALTER IN HER STEPS
UNTIL SHE HAS NOTHING LEFT

MAN PLEASE THINK WHAT THE CRY REALLY IS

MAN LOVE WOMAN
LOVE WOMAN TO EXTREME
LET'S WALK TOGETHER
SAVE MY ESTEEM

MAN YOU TOUGH
I KNOW THAT!
BUT MAN THINK OF THIS FACT
MAN NEED WOMAN
IT'S THE NATURAL ACT.

-Brenda Johnson

AS IF

I WRITE THIS POEM
AS IF
YOU TRULY LOVE ME STILL
I THINK
I WISH
I PONDER
AS IF
TO REFUSE THE SPINNING WHEEL

I GUESS I'M STILL IN LOVE
AS IF
WE NEVER REALLY SCATTERED
LOVE HAS A WAY OF SPINNING
AS IF
IT NEVER REALLY MATTERED.

-Brenda Johnson

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LANDSCAPE WITH DESERT & HORSES

The desert's breadth is a long walk
toward the pencil line of a horizon
full of mirages rising
from the sea level of sand
sand white as the holy dunes of snow/
in a convent yard and the sun
a pale wafer left from communion
on a slate high and brave
as the top of the world. The desert
is filled with blue lizards, monsters
heralding the end/
of the world which will be as a desert
a field of shining bones scattered
across four hemispheres, four tables
set with the whitest possible porcelain.
Even when the moon rises
there is no respite from the cold
that congeals against the sky
clouding its life for the season.
The horses love the desert.
You can tell by the knotted pulse
in their necks as they bend
to take water from the silver ribbons
of springs.
In the distance,
they see other horses,
red moments of color
against the gold curtain of land.
The horses are loved by the desert
as they learn to love their enemies:
wind, rivers that sink
into lost canyons,
a sun exploding into an iridescence
that washes the sky.
Evening, the arm of light
across the moon protects its rocky face.
The silence is deep as a pool,
even meditation is not as round
and quiet and dark.
A stubborn silence,
an unanswerable threat, the response
to a foreign greeting,
the reunion of time and light.

-Beth Brown

You are encouraged to send your poems or other expressions of thought to the FLAME c/o the editor, David L. Rice.
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